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### **VISIONS OF THE CROSS AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUE CROSS: TRANSLATION, RECEPTION, COMPOSITION IN LATE ANTIQUE ARMENIA**

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**VISIONS OF THE CROSS AND THE DISCOVERY  
OF THE TRUE CROSS: TRANSLATION, RECEPTION,  
COMPOSITION IN LATE ANTIQUE ARMENIA<sup>1</sup>**

**Keywords:** *Visions of the Cross, Discovery of the Cross, Emperor Constantine, Late Antiquity, hagiography.*

***Premise***

My interest in the visions of the cross and the veneration of the relic of the True Cross in the Armenian tradition was triggered many years ago during research towards my doctoral dissertation. At that time discussions and conversations with my senior colleague and then friend Prof. Erna Manea Shirinian were fundamental in my personal and professional growth as a scholar. It was her who introduced me to the intricacies of the Armenian *Life of St Sylvester* and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus, two texts for whose study Shirinian has made trail-blazing contributions. They feature, among others, important narratives on visions and discoveries of the True Cross. It was her who directed me to pay close attention to verbal formulations in these narratives in order to trace the chains of transmission of texts and traditions in medieval Armenia. It is, thus, with pleasure and feeling of gratitude that I bring together material I have collected on the subject, hoping that my analysis will do justice to the scholarly rigour I have learned to apply to research from my friend Erna.

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## ***1. Introduction: Joining Heaven and Earth***

The material remnant of the very cross on which Jesus was crucified became an object of veneration both in the East and in the West sometime after the middle of the fourth century. The cult of the True Cross spread from what Christians considered the geographical centre of the world, which also housed almost the entire piece of this coveted relic until the middle of the seventh century – Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The veneration for the Holy Wood or the Wood of Life, especially in the form of more mobile, smaller particles removed from the main object, travelled together with stories that gave a meaning (or multiple meanings) to and authenticated the veracity of the True Cross. Two groups of such narratives abundantly attested in various languages reached Armenia too. They formed the basis of further cycles, inspired new versions, and became integrated in other stories more specifically linked to Armenian interests. The subject of one constellation of texts is an imperial celestial *Vision of the Cross*. Its recipient was none other than the proverbial first Christian Emperor – Constantine the Great. The other group comprises a series of related texts that take us from the heavenly elevation to the ground, or rather underground, in Jerusalem. They describe how exactly the very cross on which Jesus died was discovered in the Holy City and by whom. The protagonists are either Constantine’s mother Helena or a legendary queen Protonike. For the sake of convenience, they are grouped under a common title of the *Discovery of the True Cross*. The history of the transmission

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<sup>2</sup> There are numerous studies on the True Cross and its veneration. The following are some essential works on which I have relied: **Anatole Frolov**, *La relique de la Vraie Croix: recherches sur le développement d’un culte*, Paris, 1961; **Stephan Borgehammar**, *How the Cross was found, from event to medieval legend*, Stockholm, 1991; **Jan Willem Drijvers**, *Helena Augusta: the Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding of the True Cross*, Leiden, 1992; **Han J.W. Drijvers & Jan Willen Drijvers**, *The Finding of the True Cross. The Judas Kyriakos Legend in Syriac. Introduction, text and translation (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 565, Subsidia 93)*, Louvain, 1997; **Jan Willem Drijvers**, *Helena Augusta, the Cross and the Myth: some new reflections*, in **Brandes, W., Dermandt, A. et al** (eds), *Millennium. Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.*, Berlin, 2011, pp. 125-74; **Stefan Heid**, *Kreuz, Jerusalem, Kosmos: Aspekte frühchristlicher Staurologie*, Münster, 2001; **Holger Klein**, *Constantine, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople*, in **Durand, J., Flusin, B.** (eds), *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, Paris, 2004, pp. 29-59; **Holger Klein**, *Byzanz, der Westen und das ‘wahre’ Kreuz: die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden, 2004; **Barbara Baert**, *A Heritage of Holy Wood. The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image*, Leiden, 2004; **John Wortley**, *The Wood of the Cross, in Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, No. VI: 1-19, Farnham-Burlington, 2009.

of these two textual groups is anything but isolated. On the contrary, often a version of Constantine's *Vision of the Cross* was copied under the same rubric as the *Discovery of the Cross*. At other times, when separated, each with its own heading, they were transmitted in the same codices. This paper traces the translation, reception and reworking of these legends in Late Antique Armenia revealing a noteworthy availability of variants.

## ***2. Visions and Discoveries of the True Cross: Who, When, Where***

There are numerous witnesses to Constantine the Great's *Vision of the Cross*. Greek, Latin, and Syriac sources, including translations based on them, locate this event in different places. For some the vision of a cross, depicted in quite a variety of verbal formulations, appeared just outside ancient Rome at the Milvian Bridge before the battle with Maxentius in 312 AD. The *Vision at the Milvian Bridge* was undoubtedly the most popular in the West. For others, Constantine's *Vision*, always preceding a battle, occurred in Gaul, at the banks of the river Danube, in the 'west', near the city of Byzantion or in an undetermined location. The enemies could be Maxentius and his army, the Goths, unspecified barbarians or even 'Byzantines'. Variants of or references to the *Vision* in Greek and Latin sources, either surviving or reconstructed, occur in such authors as Lactantius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gelasius of Caesarea, Rufinus, Philostorgius, Socrates and Sozomen.<sup>3</sup> The *Vision on the Danube* was particularly widespread in the East and is attested in Syriac (BHO 216 and BHO 218), Greek (BHG 396), Armenian, Georgian, and Sogdian. Indeed, it may have been an eastern reaction to the Roman variant of the *Vision at the Milvian Bridge*, although Sozomen included both in his *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>4</sup> Each of the tales had their own smaller variations in different retellings, a situation typical for numerous popular hagiographic tales.

In manuscripts the *Vision on the Danube* often appears as a *Prologue* to the *Discovery of the Cross* in the variant known as the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* (the so-called J-K version of the *Discovery by Helena*, see below). Three main

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<sup>3</sup> Michel van Esbroeck, "Legends about Constantine in Armenian", in Samuelian, T. J. (ed.), *Classical Armenian Culture: Influences and Creativity*, Chico (CA), 1982, pp. 79-101, esp. 80-84 for all these variants and their parallels in Armenian sources.

<sup>4</sup> Drijvers & Drijvers, *The Finding of the True Cross*, p. 21 remarks that the *Vision on the Danube* could have been an eastern reaction to the Roman variant of the *Vision at the Milvian Bridge*.

narrative types on the *Discovery of the Cross* emerged between the end of the fourth and mid-fifth centuries: the *Discovery of Helena* (H version, BHG 398); the *Discovery of Protonike* (P version, BHO 211 (Syriac) and BHO 213 (Armenian)); and the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* (the J-K version, BHO 216, BHO 217) which aimed to harmonise H and P. The relative chronology between H and P has been debated in scholarship. Some scholars suggested that they emerged independently and synchronically, with a parallel diffusion in fourth-fifth centuries, but others assign the priority to H, with P representing a reaction to it from a different cultural perspective. J-K appears to be a derivative of H but with new details, as well as knowledge of P.<sup>5</sup> The H version features Empress Helena as the main protagonist, who travelled to Jerusalem in search of the True Cross. In some variants of the story, she is aided by Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem who identifies the True Cross from among the three that were unearthed. The P version dates the discovery of the True Cross to the time of Emperor Tiberius (42 BC-37 AD), rather than Constantine, and assigns the central role to an otherwise unattested and surely non-historic wife of Tiberius' lieutenant Claudius Caesar – Queen Protonike. It is Protonike who travels from Rome to Jerusalem and identifies the True Cross due to a miracle. Upon the sudden death of her daughter, all three crosses are placed on her and only the True Cross accomplishes the miracle of raising her from the dead. In later centuries this variant was titled the *First Discovery of the Cross* in manuscripts to emphasise that it occurred before Helena's discovery the *second* time. The J-K version ascribes the discovery,

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<sup>5</sup> **Johannes Straubinger**, *Die Kreuzauffindungslegende. Untersuchungen über ihre altchristlichen Fassungen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der syrischer Texte*, Paderborn, 1912, pp. 66, 94-98, compared the Latin, Greek and Syriac versions of the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* stating that the Latin and Greek versions are based on a Syriac *Vorlage*. However, further research has led to the conclusion that a Greek *Urtext* from Jerusalem is at the basis of all translations and variants. See **Drijvers**, *Helena Augusta*, pp. 79-145 for the Helena Legend, pp. 147-63 for the Protonike Legend and pp. 165-80 for the Judas Kyriakos Legend. Here and in **Drijvers & Drijvers**, *The Finding of the True Cross*, pp. 12-6, 20-21, the authors hold that the H version emerged prior to P, while J-K essentially tried to harmonise the two. They emphasise the importance of distinguishing between H and J-K variants and date the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* between 415 and c. 450, in Greek, in a Jerusalemite milieu. **Stefan Heid**, *Zur frühen Protonike- und Kyriakoslegende*, *Analecta Bollandiana* 109/1, 1991, pp. 73-108, on the other hand, argued that H and P versions were originally independent of each other and only a later redaction of P updated the story in a way to link it to H and imperial propaganda. **Wortley**, *The Wood of the Cross*, pp. 3-4, too, proposes that H and P co-existed almost from the start. According to him, P was produced by the Jerusalemite clergy who reacted against imperial claims to the True Cross relic and its discovery. It took time before one of the versions would become dominant in a given geographical-linguistic area.

again, to Helena but here she is helped by a Jew named Judas, a name that appears also in Protonike's discovery as one of the Jews who witnessed the event. In the J-K version Judas' family maintained the secret on the location of the True Cross. He first hides this information from Helena, but then (under torture) repents, helps Helena to find the cross and converts to Christianity taking the name Kyriakos (hence the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*). Helena then takes the nails from the cross to Constantinople where they are put to various uses according to different versions.<sup>6</sup> Drijvers remarks on the immense popularity of K in the West, to the point that it became the standard version of *Helena's Discovery*. It did not enjoy the same fortune in the Greek-speaking East. Nevertheless, J-K was "extremely popular" also in Syriac.<sup>7</sup> All three narratives were known in Armenian, but the chronology, the transmission channels and the popularity of one version compared to the others, deserves a closer look than has been accorded thus far.

### ***3. The Armenian Reception: between Translation and Adaptation***

#### **3.1. Lazar P'arpec'i and variants of the Vision and Discovery of the Cross**

The Armenian *Vision of the Cross on the Danube* has been published by Sanspeur as an independent text based on six *Homiliary* manuscripts. Sanspeur's description of manuscripts reveals that in all of them the *Vision* was followed by the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*, like in many Syriac and Greek codices.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the

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<sup>6</sup> **Van Esbroeck**, *Legends about Constantine*, p. 86 thinks that the *Vorlage* of all these translations (of the J-K version) was "the Greek account". However, subsequent research has indicated how complicated it is to pinpoint the "Greek account".

<sup>7</sup> **Drijvers**, *Helena Augusta*, p. 176.

<sup>8</sup> **Clotaire Sanspeur**, *La Version arménienne de la Visio Constantini BHG 396, Handēs Amsōreay* 88/7-9, 1974, cols 307-320. In one Greek version published by **Eberhard Nestlé**, *Die Kreuzauffindungslegende, Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 4, 1895, pp. 319-345, ms Sinai 493 (c. 800 AD), the *Vision on the Danube* (pp. 324-5) serves as a prologue to the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*. However, this is not the case in the other mss published in this edition. In the oldest Syriac manuscript with the *Vision on the Danube*, the latter appears as a prologue to the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*, too. This is Leningrad/St. Petersburg ms N.S. 4 (dated c. 500 AD). **Drijvers & Drijvers**, *The Finding of the True Cross*, pp. 20-22, 36 for the Syriac text and p. 54 for the English translation. The Syriac manuscript British Library ms Add. 12.174 dated to 1196 contains the *Discovery of the Cross by Protonike*, *Constantine's Vision of the Cross on the Danube*, and the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* in that order. This is published in **Eberhard Nestlé**, *De Sancta Cruce. Ein Beitrag zur Christlichen Legendengeschichte*, Berlin 1889, pp. 7-20. According to these authors the original version of the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* probably did not include the *Vision on the Danube* but it was

Armenian edition of the *Vision* ends with the notice of Constantine sending his mother Helena to Jerusalem in search of the Holy Cross, but the following text that recounts this event was not included in the publication. Numerous manuscripts transmit all three texts together, i.e. the so-called *First Discovery* by Protonike, the *Vision on the Danube*, and the so-called *Second Discovery* by Helena (the J-K version) with the *Discovery of the nails* rubricated as a separate text. It is likely that this arrangement goes back at least to the earliest organisation of the Armenian festal in 747 (Տօճաւկաւն/Tōnakan) by Sołomon of the Mak'encoc' monastery because it is attested in the celebrated *Homiliary of Muš* (Մշն Ճառընսոյի), as well as other homiliaries that reflect the arrangement of Sołomon but that are independent of the *Homiliary of Muš* or each other.<sup>9</sup> The texts themselves could have circulated even earlier and reflected a Greek (rather than Syriac based on features of the translation) model whence they were translated. Unfortunately, there is no scholarly publication of the Armenian text of Helena's *Discovery of the Cross*. Although at this stage of research it is advisable to remain open to the possibility that both H and J-K versions may be

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added to it very soon. Indeed, **Sanspeur**, *La Version arménienne*, p. 308 cites Greek manuscripts of the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* without the *Prologue* and **van Esbroeck**, *Legends about Constantine*, p. 87 likewise mentions the London ms Add.14.644 in Syriac without the *Prologue*. No mention of the *Vision of the Cross on the Danube* appearing alone is discussed in the works I consulted. See also **Borgehammar**, *How the Cross was found*, pp. 151, 241-2. On the Georgian version of the *Vision* see **Sanspeur**, *La Version arménienne*, 308 fn 3. It is published in **Akaki Šanidze**, *Jveli K'art'ulis K'restomat'ia lek'sikonik'urt*, Tiflis, 1935, pp. 45-52.

<sup>9</sup> It is necessary to conduct a full review of manuscripts which goes beyond the limits of this article. However, several manuscripts of *Tōnakans* (Festals) and *Čarəntirs* (Homiliaries) adduce such an arrangement of texts. They seem to go back to the model of the earliest *Tōnakan* established by Sołomon of the Mak'encoc' Monastery, but have been transmitted independently of each other. This provides grounds to hypothesise that their commonalities are due to the original arrangement and inclusion of texts by Sołomon Mak'encoc'i. These manuscripts include: P110, P115, P117, M7729, M993, M1521, M1524, M1525, M7441. Without doubt, there are numerous other manuscripts with the same sequence of texts and it is worth exploring this subject further, with the purpose of attempting to reconstruct the original structure of and texts included in Sołomon's *Tōnakan*, among other issues. All manuscripts are cited according to the conventions of the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes: P=Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, M=Matenadaran, Mačtoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan. On the *Homiliary of Muš*, other related manuscripts and the organisation of the Sanctoral in the Armenian church see: **Michel van Esbroeck**, *Salomon de Makenoc', Vardapet du VIIIe siècle, Armeniaca. Mélanges d'Études Arméniennes*, Venice, 1969, pp. 33-44; Artašes Mat'evosyan, Երբ և ուր և որտեղ է գրվել Մշն Տօճաւկաւն-Ճառընսոյի [Where and when was the Festal-Homiliary of Muš written], *Banber Matenadarani* 9, 1969, pp. 137-162.

transmitted in Armenian manuscripts, my initial impression is that the H version did not circulate in Armenia independently. The discussion of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus below renders credit to this hypothesis.

In vol. 3 of the 12-volume collection of complete *Vitae et Martyria Sanctorum* (*Լիակատար վարք եւ վկայաբանութիւնք սրբոց*) we do find a *Life of the Holy Emperor Constantine and his Mother Holy Queen Helena* (Վարք Սրբոյն Կոստանդիանոսի թագաւորին, եւ մօրն նորա սուրբ զշխոյին չեղինեայ) which combines different narratives on the conversion of Constantine, his vision of the cross, and Helena's discovery of the True Cross. There is a brief reference to the discovery of Helena with the help of Judas-Kyriakos also in the text of the latter's *Martyrdom* published in vol. 2 of the same collection: *Martyrdom of Bishop Cyril or Judas Kyriakos and his mother Anna* (Վկայաբանութիւն Սրբոյն Կիւրղի եպիսկոպոսի, որ եւ Կիւրղոս կամ Կիւրակոս Յուդա, եւ մօր նորա Աննայի).<sup>10</sup> However, these are rather problematic publications. The multi-volume edition of the *Vitae Sanctorum* was an important accomplishment and to date often remains the only publication of many hagiographical compositions. Yet, it suffers from grave text-critical and philological problems, including editorial intrusions, corrections, expansions, substitution of terms or entire text-blocks in the published version compared to manuscript variants without indication. These editorial practices make the use of the texts in these volumes rather unfit for scholarly purposes.<sup>11</sup> The *Life of Constantine and Helena* in the collection *Vitae Sanctorum* was subject to these problematic changes. It reads more like a modern editor's compilation of stories related to Constantine and Helena from different sources with some commentaries, explanations, and expansions, all incorporated into one, artificially unitary text. The manuscript bases of the publication are anything but clear. Unfortunately, the present article cannot rely on this edition, nor are others

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<sup>10</sup> For the text of the *Life of Constantine and Helena*, see *Լիակատար վարք եւ վկայաբանութիւնք* [Complete Lives and Martyrologies of Saints], *Mkrtič' Awgerean* (ed.), vol. 3, Venice, 1812, pp. 239-273; for the *Life of Cyril or Judas Kyriakos* see, *Լիակատար վարք եւ վկայաբանութիւնք* [Complete Lives and Martyrologies of Saints], *Mkrtič' Awgerean* (ed.), vol. 2, Venice, 1811, pp. 429-459.

<sup>11</sup> These problems are aptly described by **Hrach Bartikian**, *Քրիստոնէությունը Փոքր Հայքում. Ազգային-կրոնական եւ սոցիալ-քաղաքական իրավիճակը նահանգում III դարի երկրորդ կեսին (ըստ IV դարի սրբոց վկայաբանութեան)* [Christianity in Armenia Minor: The Ethno-religious and socio-political situation in the Province in the second half of the III century (based on IV century saints' lives)], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 2, 2001, pp. 3-43, esp. pp. 5-8.

available. Therefore, despite a voluminous scholarly output on the *Discovery of the Cross* in different languages, the study of the Armenian tradition with its own variants, not to mention its place in the multi-lingual transmission of these narratives, remains a *desideratum*. One of the purposes of this article is to draw attention to this major gap.

The earliest testimony that a *Vision* of Constantine and Helena's search for the True Cross were being incorporated in texts relevant to Armenia comes from a Greek-language source. It is in the *Life of St Gregory the Illuminator*, known with the siglum *Vg*, representing the *V* recension of Agat'angelos.<sup>12</sup> Two sections in this text are relevant to the discussion at hand. First, it associates Constantine's baptism by Sylvester to sending of his "most pious and Christ-loving mother Helena" to the Holy City in search of the "venerable cross".<sup>13</sup> The information is too succinct to allow any hypothesis with regards to the author's knowledge of H vs J-K version of the *Discovery*, although given the popularity of J-K attested in other sources, the latter could well be the story that the author had in mind. Then, in the section that describes Constantine's and Trdat's meeting in Rome, where each recounted his own conversion story, Constantine closes his part remembering the "τὴν ὀπτασίαν καὶ νίκην διὰ τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ/the vision and the victory thanks to the venerable cross".<sup>14</sup> In this case too, we can only conjecture regarding the version of Constantine's *Vision* that the author and his audience may have imagined. Thus, we can only guess where the vision and subsequent victory was thought to have taken place, and it is by no means certain that one should take this as an allusion to the *Vision on the Danube* because *this* was the most popular text of Constantine's *Vision* in eastern Christian sources. The received Armenian Agat'angelos (Aa) does not include Constantine's *Vision*

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<sup>12</sup> The fundamental work on these versions remains **Gérard Garitte**, *Documents pour l'étude du livre d'Agathange*, Vatican, 1946; a succinct synopsis of the versions in **Gabriele Winkler**, "Our Present Knowledge of the History of Agat'angelos and its oriental versions", *REArm* 14 (1980), pp. 125-41. On the dependent Arabic translation (Va) see **Aram Ter-Ghevondian**, Ագաթանգեղոսի արարական խմբագրության նորահայտ ձեռագիրը, Սին. 455 [The newly discovered complete manuscript of the Arabic recension of Agat'angelos. Sin. 455], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 60/1, 1973, pp. 209-237. This *Vision* is discussed in **Nazéni Garibian**, Costantino nella tradizione ecclesiastica armena, in Costantino I. Enciclopedia costantiniana sulla figura e l'immagine dell'imperatore del cosiddetto Editto di Milano 313-2013, vol. 2, Rome, 2013, here pp. 443-444.

<sup>13</sup> **Garitte**, Documents, p. 107 (Vg §176, Va §169).

<sup>14</sup> **Garitte**, Documents, p. 113 (Vg §189, Va §182)

but describes his victories with the power of the cross and associates military victory with the cross on numerous occasions.<sup>15</sup>

There seems to be more certainty when it comes to text-types alluded to in Łazar P‘arpec‘i’s *History of the Armenians*. However, the analysis of Łazar P‘arpeci’s testimony in parallel with the Armenian and Greek *Visions on the Danube*, as well as the larger textual context of the *Vision* and the *Discovery* highlight the multiple forms of the traditions and the difficulty of positing a specific extant text as P‘arpec‘i’s single source:

Łazar P‘arpec‘i <sup>16</sup>	<i>Vision of Constantine on the Danube</i> <sup>17</sup>	<i>Vision of the Constantine on the Danube</i> <sup>18</sup>
<p>... եւ ի գալն աստուածակամ հրամանով սրբոյն Կոստանդիանոսի ի վերայ անթիւ բազմութեանն Գթաց ի պատերազմ, եւ առ եգերբն Ղեկովք գետոյ արարեալ զիր զօրու բանակատելս,</p>	<p>Յամի եւթներորդի թագաւորութեանն Կոս- տանդիանոսի մեծ թա- գաւորի ... ժողովեցան բազմութիւն խոլժաղուժ ազգաց ի վերայ գետոյն Դանուբայ. որք ինդրէին անցանկ եւ աւերել գամենայն աշխարհն մինչեւ յարեւելս: Իսկ իբրեւ զիտաց<sup>19</sup> թագաւորն</p>	<p>Ἐν ἔτει ἐβδόμῳ τῆς βασιλείας Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως ... συνήχθησαν πλῆθος βαρβάρων ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν καλούμενον Δάνουβιν, ζητούντων διαπεράσαι καὶ πορθῆσαι πᾶσαν τὴν χώραν μέχρι τῆς ἀνατολῆς. Μαθὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος, συναγαγὼν ἅπαν τὸ ἴδιον</p>

<sup>15</sup> **Agat‘angelos**, *History of the Armenians* §868; **Garibian**, Costantino, p. 444; **Marco Bais**, Costantino nelle fonti storiografiche armene, in **Pampaloni, M., Bishara, E.** (eds), Costantino e l’Oriente. L’impero, i suoi confini e le sue estensioni. Atti del convegno di studi promosso dal PIO in occasione della ricorrenza costantiniana (313-2013), Roma 18 aprile, 2013, Rome, 2016, pp. 57-211, here p. 67; **Zaroui Pogossian**, Visions and Symbolism of the Cross in Some Early Armenian Texts, *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 41 (2022), 451-466.

<sup>16</sup> **Ղազար Փարպեցի**, Պատմութիւն հայոց [**Łazar P‘arpeci**, *History of the Armenians*], Yerevan, 1982, 10. I have deliberately translated the excerpt literally.

<sup>17</sup> **Sanspeur**, *La Version arménienne*, 315. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>18</sup> **Nestlé**, *Die Kreuzauffindungslegende*, pp. 324-5.

<sup>19</sup> **Sanspeur**, *La Version arménienne*, 315 chose the *lectio* լուսւ (he heard) in his edition, placing զիտաց in the critical apparatus. Based on the Greek *Vorlage* and the fact that Sanspeur’s ms D (=Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Arm. 117) which has a superior text have the variant զիտաց, I have placed that in my citation of the *Vision*.

<p>որ եւ աստուածային տեսչութեանն լինէր արժանի, օրինակեալ նմա յայտնապէս յերկնից աստեղեայ լուսատեսիկ նշան կենսատու խաչին, բերելով շուրջ զինքեամբ ճառագայթից նշանագիրս, թէ «այսու յաղթեսցես»:</p> <p>... and through a God-imparted command, holy Constantine came to fight against an innumerable multitude of Goths. And [he] put up his hosts' army-camp on the banks of the river Łekovb [Danube? ZP].<sup>20</sup></p>	<p>Կոստանդիանոս ժողովեալ զնոսա ի միասին, վաղվաղակի զիւր զաւրսն գումարեալ եւ հասեալ անցանէր յայն կոյս Դանուբայ: Եւ ածեալ փոս քրանակաւն առ եզերք գետոյն՝ արգելոյր զնոսա:</p> <p>...</p> <p>Իսկ իբրեւ հանդերձեալք էին ընդ վաղիւ խառնիլ ընդ միմեանս պատերազմաւ, տեսանէ ակնյայտնի զաւրինակ աստուածեղէն խաչին ի վերուստ փայլեալ, որ ունէր վերնագիր աստեղեայ. այնու յաղթեա:</p> <p>In the seventh year of the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great ... a multitude of Barbarian nations assembled at the river Danube. They sought to cross [the river] and pillage the entire land until the east. When the Emperor Constantine learned that they had gathered together, he hastily summoned his army, reached there and crossed to</p>	<p>αὐτοῦ στρατεύμα, παραγίνεται πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ πέραν τοῦ Δανουβίου. Καὶ πήξας τὸ φοσσάτον παρὰ τὰς ὄχθας τοῦ ποταμοῦ, διεκώλυσεν αὐτοῦς.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Ὡς δὲ ἤμελλον τῆ ἐπαύριον συνάπτειν τὸν πόλεμον, τῆ νυκτὶ ἐκείνῃ βλέπει ὀφθαλμοφανῶς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σταυροῦ σέβας ἱερὸν ὑπεράνωθεν λάμπων, ἔχον ἐπιγραφὴν δι' ἀστέρων· ἐν τούτῳ νίκα.</p> <p>In the seventh year of the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great ... a multitude of Barbarians assembled at the river called Danube. They sought to cross the river and pillage the entire land until the east. When the Emperor Constantine learned about this, he gathered all of his army and reached them on the other side of the Danube.</p>
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<sup>20</sup> The text is corrupt here and reads Łekovb (Լեկովբ). **Lazar P'arpec'i**, *History*, p. 10. It is not clear whether this corruption is due to the transmission of P'arpec'i's *History* or its source.

<p>And he was made worthy of divine providence. The model of the luminous sign of the life-giving cross made of stars was clearly depicted for him in the sky, surrounded by rays with the writing<sup>21</sup>. <i>You will win with this.</i></p>	<p>the other side of the Danube. He made trenches around the army along the banks of the river and stopped them. ...</p> <p>And when they were about to engage<sup>22</sup> with each other in battle, the following day, he saw appearing to the eyes the divinely made model of the cross shining above, which had a title made of stars: <i>win with it.</i></p>	<p>He set [his] military [camp] along the banks of the river and stopped them. ...</p> <p>And when he was about to engage with [the enemy] in battle the next day, in that night, he saw appearing to the eyes, in the sky, the sacred wonder of the cross shining above, having a title made of stars: <i>win with this.</i></p>
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The juxtaposition of the excerpts indicates that Łazar P'arpec'i hardly reproduced the *Vision on the Danube* verbatim and one may even doubt if he had this text in front of his eyes. Thus, I am less confident in positing the Armenian *Vision* as P'arpec'i's direct source than Sanspeur did.<sup>23</sup> Although the emendation of Łekovb to Danube is conjectural, in the preceding sentences P'arpec'i describes the city of Byzantion in Thrace and the subsequent founding of Constantinople. This would imply a geographical location in the East for the *Vision* and the emendation of Łekovb to Danube does not seem too far off the mark. At any rate, the *Vision* is certainly not imagined to take place in the western part of the Roman Empire, such as at the Milvian bridge. The association of the *Vision* with the foundation of Constantinople characterises also Movsēs

<sup>21</sup> Lit. 'writing with signs'.

<sup>22</sup> Lit. 'mix'.

<sup>23</sup> Pace **Sanspeur**, *La Version arménienne*, 314-316 for whom P'arpec'i's direct dependence on the *Vision* was "sans nul doute". See also **Clotaire Sanspeur**, *Trois Sources Byzantines de l'«Histoire des Arméniens» de Lazare de P'arpi*, *Byzantion* 44, 1974, pp. 440-448, esp. 441-444. Sanspeur's conclusions are accepted by **Robert Thomson** (trans. and comm.), *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i*, Atlanta, 1991, p. 36. Pertinent remarks on the differences between Łazar P'arpec'i and the *Vision of the Cross*, as well as contextualising P'arpec'i's depiction of Constantine in the rich Armenian tradition on this emperor see **Bais**, *Costantino*, pp. 83-87, where Bais, too, calls for caution in accepting Sanspeur's conclusions without reservations. See also **Garibian**, *Costantino*, p. 446.



P‘arpec‘i connects this *Vision* and Constantine’s subsequent victory with his desire to find the actual wood of the cross – the True Cross. He, thus sends his mother Helena to Jerusalem to search for it:

... եւ խնդիր փութապէս զիւտիս այսմ հոգացեալ՝ ճեպով զիւր մայրն զերանելին Հեղինէ յԵրուսաղէմ առաքէր: Եւ թէ ո՛րպէս անդ ի ձեռն ջերմ խնդրոյ սրբոյ մարդոյն յայտնեցաւ կենաց փայտն՝ զիստէ ամենայն անձն, ի նորին գրոց տեղեկացեալ զգիւտ փրկութեան մերոյ:

... and eagerly undertaking a search to discover this [cross], he [Constantine] hastily sent his mother, the blessed Helena, to Jerusalem. And how there through the fervent search of the holy man the wood of life was revealed, everyone knows who has learned of the discovery of our salvation from his book.<sup>24</sup>

Like *Vg* also Łazar P‘arpec‘i ascribes the initiative of sending Helena to Jerusalem to Constantine himself, although *Vg* mentions no helper of Helena. Łazar, on the other hand, does not identify the “holy man”, but it most likely alluded to Judas Kyriakos. Another possible protagonist would be Macarius of Jerusalem who appears in the H version of the *Discovery*. However, there he has a different function which does not fit P‘arpec‘i’s narrative. Macarius *prays* for a revelation about the location of the cross, rather than physically *searching* for it.<sup>25</sup> In the citation P‘arpec‘i mentions “his book” which has been interpreted differently by scholars. For Thomson it was an erroneous reference to the *History* attributed to P‘awstos Buzand, which does not contain such details. For Bais it could allude to a book authored by Judas Kyriakos or the other Judas that features in the *Discovery by Protonike*.<sup>26</sup> Yet, it is also possible that ‘by his book’ P‘arpec‘i may mean a book *about* Judas Kyriakos, thus, the *Discovery of the Cross*. This proposal must remain conjectural due to the brevity of Łazar’s information.

To sum up, Łazar P‘arpec‘i presents the following sequence of narrative units: 1) a description of the city of Byzantion; 2) Constantine meeting an enemy army at a river; 3) Constantine’s *Vision of the Cross* in the sky, made of stars; 4) the emperor’s victory with the help of the cross; 5) his sending of Helena to Jerusalem in search of the True Cross and its *Discovery*; 6) the foundation of

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<sup>24</sup> Łazar P‘arpec‘i, *History*, pp. 11-12. The translation to English is taken from Thomson, *Łazar P‘arpec‘i*, p. 36 with modifications.

<sup>25</sup> Drijvers, Helena Augusta, pp. 98, 101, 104, 108.

<sup>26</sup> See note 23 for Thomson. Bais, Costantino, p. 86.

Constantinople. Łazar P‘arpec‘i’s is a crucial witness for establishing the chronology of the diffusion of narratives (and their types) related to the *Vision* and *Discovery of the Cross* in Armenia. We can safely state that the *Vision on the Danube* and the J-K version of the *Discovery* were known in Armenia in some shape before he penned his *History*, i.e. prior to 500.

### 3.2. Movsēs Xorenac‘i and variants of the *Vision and Discovery of the Cross*

In his typically dense study “Legends about Constantine in Armenian” one of the most brilliant Orientalists of the last century Michel van Esbroeck affirmed that the *Inventio Crucis* story that enjoyed the greatest popularity in Armenia was the P version. Its availability in Armenian very early on overshadowed any interest in ‘Helena’s story’ of the *Discovery* and the accompanying Constantine’s *Vision on the Danube*.<sup>27</sup> Both this conclusion and the relevant historical explanation that van Esbroeck appended to buttress his points deserve to be revisited in light of more recent research. To begin with, there exists no list of Armenian manuscripts of the respective texts that would provide at least a preliminary numeric data regarding the extent of their diffusion. Even a most basic chronological and spatial distribution of the relevant manuscripts’ production which would allow us to evaluate their popularity, is lacking. What follows will at least problematise these issues and highlight the many, still unresolved questions regarding the circulation of the *Vision of the Cross* and *Discovery of the True Cross* narratives in late antique Armenia.

The *Discovery of the Cross by Protonike*, who became Patronikē in the Armenian version (BHO 213), was translated from Syriac as part of the *Doctrina Addai* and has been published together with it, although not critically.<sup>28</sup> This translation is traditionally dated to the fifth century and it eventually gave rise to a significant cluster of hagiographic narratives in Armenian focusing on Addai/Thaddaeus who became central for affirming the Apostolic foundations of the Armenian Church. Thaddaeus’ mission was extended from Edessa to Armenia, where he converted Sanduxt – the daughter of King Sanatruk. He then became a martyr in Armenia. The same fate awaited his disciple, the ‘apostoles’

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<sup>27</sup> Van Esbroeck, *Legends about Constantine*, pp 88-90.

<sup>28</sup> Լաբուբնայ, Թուղթ Աբգարու [Labubna, Letter of Abgar], Venice, 1868, pp. 12-17; another version on pp. 62-68.

Sanduxt.<sup>29</sup> Movsēs Xorenac‘i’s *History of the Armenians* exemplifies a further layer of assimilation of these narratives in the Armenian milieu, where Edessa was considered an Armenian city and Abgar – the first king to convert to Christianity according to the *Doctrina Addai* – an Armenian King.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, considering Xorenac‘i’s close knowledge and reworking of the *Doctrina Addai*, it is intriguing that he completely omits any mention of Protonike’s *Discovery of the Cross*.

Movsēs Xorenac‘i, like Łazar P‘arpec‘i, knew and integrated into his *History* a Constantinian *Vision of the Cross*. Later in the text he included a mere two sentences on Helena’s *Discovery of the Cross*, too, based on what appears to be the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*. These two, albeit brief, narrative units are not placed together in Xorenac‘i’s *History*, but appear in Book 2 Chapters 83 and 87 respectively.<sup>31</sup> These chapters, among others, have been scrutinised since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in an effort to establish the date of Xorenac‘i’s *History*, albeit with very different conclusions. Robert Thomson, following Auguste Carrière posited the Armenian translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus and the *Life of Sylvester*, as Xorenac‘i’s main source for much of the chapters at hand, including the *Vision of the Cross*. Before analysing the specific text-blocks it is

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<sup>29</sup> Վկայաբանություն և գիւտ նշխարաց Ս. Թաղէի ամաքելոյ և Սանդիստոյ կուսի [Martyrdom and the invention of relics of St. Thaddaeus Apostle and the Holy Virgin Sanduxt], *Sop‘erk‘ Haykakank‘*, vol. 8, Venice, 1853. Based on intricate calendrical calculations, Vardanyan estimates that the *Life and Martyrdom of Thaddaeus and Sanduxt* (which presumes knowledge of the *Doctrina Addai*) was composed between 420 and 423. He considers it to be the first composition in Armenian, pre-dating the *Life of Maštoc‘*. I am unable to evaluate the accuracy of these unusual calculations. Cfr. **Rafik Vardanyan**, Հայոց տոնացույցը (4-18-րդ դարեր) [The Armenian Liturgical Calendar: 4<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries], Yerevan, 1999, pp. 350-353. For further literature on Thaddaeus and Sanduxt see **Nersēs Akinean**, Վկայաբանություն Ս. Թաղէնուի և Սանդիստոյ կուսի և կանոնք Թաղէի [Martyrdom of St. Thaddaeus and Virgin Sanduxt and Canons of Thaddaeus], *Handes Amsōreay* 83, 1969, pp. 403-426 and 84, 1970, pp. 1-34; **Michel van Esbroeck**, L’Apôtre Thaddée et le Roi Sanatruk, in **Nordio, M., Zekiyani, B.L.** (eds), Atti del II simposio internazionale “Armenia-Assiria”: istituzioni e poteri all’epoca II-Khanide, 30 maggio-2 giugno, 1984, Venice, 1984, pp. 83-106; **Valentina Calzolari**, Les Apôtres Thaddée et Barthélemy. Aux origins du christianisme arménien, Turnhout, 2011; **Zaroui Pogossian**, Women at the Beginning of Christianity in Armenia, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 69/II, 2003, pp. 355-380.

<sup>30</sup> For a concise overview of Movsēs Xorenac‘i’s use and expansions of Labubna with previous bibliography, see **Robert Thomson** (trans. and comm.), Moses Khorenats‘i. History of the Armenians, revised edition, Ann Arbor, 2006, pp. 38-39.

<sup>31</sup> **Մովսէս Խորենացի**, Պատմություն հայոց [Movsēs Xorenac‘i, History of the Armenians], **Abelean, M., Yarut‘iwnean, S.** (eds), Yerevan 1991, pp. 226-7 the *Vision of the Cross* and *Ibid.*, p. 236 the *Discovery of the Cross* by Helena according to the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*.

necessary to make a short detour into these important translations, to whose study Erna Shirinian dedicated her dissertation and to which she continued to contribute significantly since then.<sup>32</sup>

The Armenian translation of Socrates Scholasticus' *Ecclesiastical history* has reached us in two redactions and is transmitted in manuscripts together with the *Life of Sylvester*, that too in two text-types.<sup>33</sup> Both were originally translated from Greek in the so-called hellenising style. The date of this translation of the *Ecclesiastical history* has not been established, but Shirinian cautiously suggests the first half of the sixth century as a plausible timeframe based on the historical context of Armenian-Byzantine contacts at that time, especially when it comes to ecclesiastical relationships. This translation is traditionally referred to as the Long Socrates.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, we have a precise date for the translation of

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<sup>32</sup> [Erna] Manea Shirinian, Краткая редакция древнеармянского перевода «Церковной истории» Сократа Схоластика [The Short Recension of the Ancient Armenian Translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus], *Vizantijskij Vremennik* 43, 1982, pp. 231-241; **Ead.**, Текстологическое значение древнеармянского перевода «Церковной Истории» Сократа Схоластика [The Textual significance of the ancient Armenian translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus"], *Kavkaz i Vizantija* 5, 1984, pp. 172-186; **Ead.**, Ricerche sulla *Storia Ecclesiastica* di Socrate Scolastico e sulle sue versioni armene, *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Rivista della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere dell'Università di Venezia* 33/3, 1994, pp. 151-167; **Günter Ch. Hansen, Manja Širinjan** (eds), *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte*, Berlin, 1995, esp. xxv-xxviii authored by Shirinian.

<sup>33</sup> There is considerable literature on *Actus Silvestri* especially for the Latin version and for the study of the narratives on the baptism of Constantine. Despite this, neither the Latin (with 300 extant manuscripts and an extremely complex textual tradition) nor the Greek (with 90 extant manuscripts) texts have been published critically. The Greek version which is of relevance to this study is still accessible mainly via the 17<sup>th</sup> century edition of **François Combéfis**, *Illustrium Christi martyri lecti triumpho vetustis Graecorum monumentis consignati*, Paris, 1659, pp. 258-336. There are also Syriac versions of the *Actus Silvestri*. For a comprehensive study of the *Actus Silvestri*, a discussion on the difficulties in establishing an 'archetype' or preparing a critical edition given the rich textual tradition, as well as different recensions of the *Vita* in Latin, Greek, and Syriac, see **Tessa Canella**, *Gli Actus Silvestri: Genesi di una leggenda su Costantino Imperatore*, Spoleto, 2006, see 1-46. It is regrettable that in this thorough, well-researched and solid work Canella does not consider the Armenian translation of the *Actus* and knows only references to it in Movsēs Xorenac'i. The edition of Combéfis is reproduced with the facing Armenian text in **Barsel Sargisyan**, Տեսություն Մեղրեսարոսի Պատմության և Մ. Խորենացույ աղբյուրաց [A Theory on the *Life of Sylvester* and the sources of M. Xorenac'i], Venice 1893.

<sup>34</sup> Both versions were published critically by Mesrop Tēr-Movsēsean in **Սոկրատայ Արղաստիկոսի** Եկեղեցական պատմություն և Պատմություն վարուց Սրբոյն Սիդրեսարոսի եպիսկոպոսին չոովմայ [The *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus and the *Life of Sylvester Bishop of Rome*], **Mesrop Tēr-Movsēsean** (ed.), Ējmiacin, 1897 (henceforth: **Tēr-Movsēsean**,

the *Life of Sylvester* by Grigor Jorop‘orec‘i in 678, at the commission of Nerseh, Prince of Iberia, who was the son-in-law of the potent Kamsarakan family, the rulers of Širak and Aršarunik‘. Some of the hellenising school translations, including Socrates and the *Life of Sylvester*, were later redacted in a more fluent Armenian idiom. It was P‘ilon Tirakac‘i who reworked both texts in 695/6 as attested in a relevant colophon, discussed by various scholars, including Shirinian who has brought further clarifications to this intricate evidence.<sup>35</sup> While in the original translations the *Life of Sylvester* followed the *Ecclesiastical History*, in this reworked version P‘ilon placed the *Life of Sylvester* at the beginning of Socrates, aiming to create a unitary, continuous text. The Armenian adaptations of Socrates and the associated *Life of Sylvester* are more than abridged versions of the relevant texts despite their now conventional label of ‘Short’ versions. As clarified by N. Byzandac‘i, Shirinian, and Thomson, they include additional material not found in the original, particularly new hagiographical and miraculous elements, references to Armenian sources, rhetorical embellishments, theological additions, various details that were thought to be of interesting to an Armenian reader, etc.<sup>36</sup>

Carrière (and Thomson) argued that Movsēs Xorenac‘i relied on the reworked Socrates (=Short Socrates) both for the *Vision of the Cross* and the *Discovery of the Cross*, in addition to many other details, such as Constantine’s conversion or St Nunē’s apostolic activities. This is one of the arguments for post-dating Xorenac‘i after the end of the seventh century. It is not my purpose

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Socrates, for all texts published therein). The parallel texts are placed on the same page. For studies on the translation of Socrates Scholasticus see the introduction of Movsēsean; **Shirinian**, The Short Recension, and **Ead.**, The Textual significance; In **Shirinian**, Ricerche sulla Storia, on p. 165 and **Hansen-Širinjan**, Sokrates, p. XXVIII, Shirinian gives the absolute *terminus ante quem* of Long Socrates as 696, but suggests the first half of the sixth as a plausible time-frame for the first, hellenising, translation. On Socrates’ work in the Armenain tradition see also the ‘Introduction’ to the English translation by Robert Thomson, who oddly does not cite either Movsēsean’s or Shirinian’s (among others) analysis of the text. **Robert Thomson** (trans. and comm.), The Armenian Adaptation of the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus [Commonly known as “the Shorter Socrates”], Leuven-Paris-Sterling, 2001, pp. 1-40.

<sup>35</sup> For the reproduction and analysis of the colophons see **Shirinian**, The Short Recension, p. 231-233, 237; **Thomson**, The Armenian Socrates, pp. 9-10.

<sup>36</sup> **Shirinian**, The Short recension, p. 238 (citing Norayr Byzandac‘i), **Thomson**, The Armenian Socrates, pp. 12-31.

here to enter the debate on the date of Xorenac'i's *History* but to point out the entangled nature of his sources, as other scholars have done for other parts of this *History*. This seems to be the case for the two particular episodes taken into consideration in this study and Xorenac'i's evidence is important for evaluating the diffusion of narratives on *Visions* and the *Discoveries* of the cross in Armenia. As a by-product the present discussion may be useful for larger issues regarding Movsēs Xorenac'i's use of sources and his working methods.<sup>37</sup>

For the present argument one must remember that already in 1893 Sargisean demonstrated that for the episode of Constantine's *Vision of the Cross* both Armenian redactions of the *Life of Sylvester* inserted another hagiographical narrative – the *Passio Eusignii*. This feature finds no parallel in the published Greek *Life of Sylvester*, an identification acknowledged by Michel van Esbroeck.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, it is worth reiterating that the only published Greek text of the *Life of Sylvester* dates back to 1659 and that there are 90 extant little studied Greek manuscripts.<sup>39</sup> According to Sargisean the *Passio Eusignii* – a martyrdom set at the time of Julian the Apostate – was Xorenac'i's source for the *Vision of Constantine*, and not the Armenian *Life of Sylvester*. He concluded that it was the Armenian translator of the *Life of Sylvester* who relied on Movsēs Xorenac'i rather than the other way round. These conclusions were reinforced by Mesrop Tēr-Movsēsean who published the critical edition of Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Sylvester* in both Armenian redactions. His analysis and juxtapositions of numerous parallel text-blocks show in even greater detail that

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<sup>37</sup> The bibliography on Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History of the Armenians* is immense. One may simplistically summarise the debate on the date and significance of his *History* as vacillating between “persistent hypercriticism and uncritical credulity” (I borrow this apt description from **Aram Topchyan**, *The Problem of the Greek Sources of Movsēs Xorenac'i's History of Armenia*, Leuven-Paris-Dudley (MA), 2006, p. 2 fn 5), not devoid of Eurocentric colonial approaches on one end and nationalist patriotism on the other. Besides Topchyan's work, see also the respective “Introductions” in **Thomson**, *Moses Khorenats'i*, pp. 1-60 and **Mahé, J.-P., Mahé, A.**, *Histoire de l'Arménie par Moïse de Khorène*. Nouvelle traduction de l'arménien classique, Paris, 1993. For methodological problems in the study of Xorenac'i's sources see also **Gagik Sargsyan**, Արքայապետի օգտագործման եղանակը Մովսես Խորենացու մոտ [The modes of using sources in Movsēs Xorenac'i], *Banber Matenadarani* 3, 1956, pp. 31-42.

<sup>38</sup> **Sargisean**, *Life of Sylvester*, I, 9 (33). For the texts see **Tēr-Movsēsean**, *Socrates*, pp. 714-5 (both versions). **Van Esbroeck**, *Legends about Constantine*, pp. 93-95, thinks that the *Passio Eusignii* even influenced the structure of *Agat'angelos*.

<sup>39</sup> See note 25.

Xorenac'i's sources were multiple, often rather entangled, and not always identifiable. This mode of combining multiple sources for the same event, topped with this own embellishments, is typical of Xorenac'i's working methods when composing his *History*.<sup>40</sup> More importantly for Tēr-Movsēsean, Xorenac'i had become an authoritative 'canonical' text by the seventh century and it is this text that became a source of inspiration for P'ilon Tirakac'i when adapting Socrates and the *Life of Sylvester* for his Armenian readers.<sup>41</sup> In his comments to the English translation of Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History* and of the Armenian adaptation of Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, Thomson holds the opposite view and argues that the revised Socrates was Movsēs Xorenac'i's source.<sup>42</sup> Lastly, Carrière (and following him Thomson) also indicated verbal parallels between Xorenac'i and John Malalas' *Chronicle's* relevant sections, i.e. both when describing Constantine's *Vision of the Cross* and the emperor's sending of his mother Helena to Jerusalem in search of the Holy Wood.<sup>43</sup>

Let us first look at the *Vision of the Cross* in these texts. A comparison of Xorenac'i, the two Armenian versions of the *Life of Sylvester*, the Greek *Passio Eusignii*, and Malalas, reveals a common core to all these texts, but with a remarkable variety of detail. The circumstances that caused the vision, its location, the verbal formulations that the medieval authors chose for describing the same phenomenon, adduce various degrees of differences. In order not to overburden the table below, the relevant episode from Constantine's *Vision on the Danube* and Łazar P'arpec'i's rendering of it are not included. This snapshot aims to capture the diversity of traditions at least in part:

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<sup>40</sup> For various examples see, **Topchyan**, *The Problem of the Greek Sources*, *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> **Tēr-Movsēsean**, *Socrates*, pp. ԻԶ-ՀԶ (pp. XLVI-LXXVI of the introduction) esp. Ծ (L) for juxtaposing the text of the *Vision of the Cross* by Movsēs Xorenac'i, the so-called Long Armenian *Socrates*, and the long Armenian *Life of Sylvester*.

<sup>42</sup> **Thomson**, *The Armenian Socrates*, pp. 5, 11, 29-31.

<sup>43</sup> **Thomson**, *Moses Khorenats'i*, pp. 230 fn 602, 606, p. 238 fn 641. See also **Bais**, *Costantino*, pp. 97-103 and **Garibian**, *Costantino*, pp. 445-446.

Authors/ Texts	Location of the vision	Constantine's Enemies	Circumstances	Time/place	Description of the Cross	The Titulus
Movsēs Xorenac'i <sup>44</sup>	N/A	N/A	Before assuming the office of emperor, after a military defeat, in great distress, while asleep: ի տրտմութեան մեծաւ ննջեալ	In sleep	իսպ աստեղեայ յերկնից պարունակեալ գրով	այսու յաղթեա
The Long <i>Life of Sylvester</i> <sup>45</sup>	Near Byzantion	The inhabitants of Byzantion led by Maximianus/իինի մարտ պատերազմի առ Բիւզանդացիս	When Constantine was a youth, after a military defeat, in sadness and distress: կայսր էր յոյժ վրդովեալ	At night, when sleeping	իսպ վասմական գերապայծառ ունելով վերնագիր աստեղաց	այսու յաղթեայ
The Short <i>Life of Sylvester</i> <sup>46</sup>	Near Byzantion	The inhabitants of Byzantion led by Maximianus/իինի մարտ ընդ Հռովմեացիս եւ Բիւզանդացիս	Sent by his father Constans, after a military defeat, in great affliction: յոյժ տրտմեալ եւ տարակուսեալ	At night when sleeping	վերնագիր աստղանշան իսպի	Չայս նշան արարեալ առաջի, յաղթես պատերազ- միդ եւ այլ մարտից

<sup>44</sup> **Movsēs Xorenac'i**, *History*, p. 226.

<sup>45</sup> **Tēr-Movsēsean**, Socrates, from Long *Life of Sylvester*, pp. 714-715 (text above).

<sup>46</sup> **Tēr-Movsēsean**, Socrates, from the Short *Life of Sylvester*, pp. 714-715 (text below).

Passio Eusignii <sup>47</sup>	In the city of Byzantion	The inhabitants of Byzantion/ὁ Βυζάντιοι	After a military defeat, in tears and affliction/ δακρῶν δὲ Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ κόμης καὶ πενθῶν	Double vision, while awake. 1. Suddenly in the sky ἐξαίφνης εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν 2 in the sky	1 γραφὴν ἑλληνικοῖς γράμμασι δι' ἀστέρων γεγραμμένην  2 σταυρὸν δι' ἀστέρων ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	1 'Κωνσταντῖν ε, ἐπίγνωθι τὸν σῶζοντά σε Θεόν, καὶ νικήσεις τὸν πόλεμον.'  2. 'Ἐν τούτῳ νικήσεις τὸν πόλεμον'.
Malalas <sup>48</sup>	In the west	Barbarians	During Constantine's reign, after a military defeat, in great affliction/ θλιβόμενος	In his sleep, in the sky/ εἰς ὕπνον εἶδεν κατ' ὄναρ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ	σταυρὸν ἐν ᾧ ἔπεγέγραπτο...	ἐν τούτῳ νίκα

<sup>47</sup> **V. Latyshev**, Ο житиях св. Великомученика Евсигния [On the Lives of Martyr Eusignius], *Журнал министерства народного просвещения. Новая серия*. Part 55, February, 1915, pp. 65-91. I have accessed this journal online (22/04/2022): [http://rusneb.ru/catalog/005664\\_000048\\_RuPRLIB18001659/](http://rusneb.ru/catalog/005664_000048_RuPRLIB18001659/) The electronic version has a curious pagination sequence, with many *non sequitur*. The *Passio Eusignii* is on pp. 69-91 of Part IV, although the previous text ends on p. 131. It is possible that these incongruencies are due to errors in scanning. For the relevant passages see *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86 (§9-10). See also **Sargisean**, *Life of Sylvester*, p. 20. For the *Passio Eusignii* he relied on Vat. Gr. 866 (*Ibid.*, p. 19). Besides the latter Latyshev's edition used four other manuscripts. On St Eusignius see also «Евсигний», *Православная Энциклопедия*, accessed on-line 22/04/2022: <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/187400.html> where a *terminus post quem* of the 7<sup>th</sup> century is suggested, while **Michel van Esbroeck**, Eusignius, *Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, pp. 1071-1072 thinks that the *Passio* was redacted towards the very end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>48</sup> **Ioannis Malalae**, *Chronographia*, **Thurn, J.** (ed.), Berlin, 2000, p. 243 (Book 13, §2); translation taken with modifications from **Jeffreys, E.**, **Jeffreys, M.**, **Scott, R.** (trans), *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, 1986, p. 172.

The parallel texts presented above are either ambiguous or silent on the location of Constantine's *Vision*. Thus, the usual classification of *Vision* narratives into a *Vision on the Danube* or *at the Milvian Bridge* appears to be too limiting. Intriguingly, the *Passio Eusignii* is highly Constantinople-centric in this specific textual unit. It recounts a battle between a very young Constantine sent by his father Constans as part of his first military experience (and a test of his courage) against the inhabitants of the city of Byzantion. The locations of the battle and the *Vision* according to Constantinople's (future) topography are provided and it is specified that Constantine set a cross after his victory in a place that would become the "forum of Constantine".<sup>49</sup> The Armenian *Life of Sylvester* in both redactions, that basically cite *Passio Eusignii* albeit with much less detail, also mention the city of Byzantion as the location of Constantine's battle and *Vision of the Cross*. This information is omitted in Movsēs Xorenac'i. However, we find a similar narrative allusion in Łazar P'arpec'i who discusses the foundation of Constantinople in the same textual environment as Constantine's *Vision of the Cross*. Whether Xorenac'i indeed had direct access to the *Passio* or knew it via the Long *Life of Sylvester* must be studied separately, especially after a thorough analysis of the *Passio* itself. There are other parallels between this text (maintained only in the Long *Life of Sylvester*) and Xorenac'i. Like the *Passio* (and the Long *Life of Sylvester*), also Xorenac'i states that Constantine was Constans' son born "of a prostitute", i.e. Helena. This unflattering characterisation of the imperial mother was more often than not suppressed or transformed in Christian sources. Indeed, the Short *Life of Sylvester* changed the description of the episode in a way as to rehabilitate Helena's status for his readers (or hearers).<sup>50</sup> Whereas in the *Life of Sylvester* and the *Passio Eusignii* the story is much longer and more circumstantial, Xorenac'i crams a great amount of information found in his source(s) to a few lines.

All the sources agree that the vision was granted to Constantine upon a military defeat when he was in a desperate emotional state. His rulership status as a caesar, komes, army general, or emperor, varies from text to text. For most, but not *Passio Eusignii*, the vision took place when Constantine was about to fall asleep or was already asleep, and in the night sky. This goes counter to the testimony of Socrates Scholasticus' *Ecclesiastical History* who says that the

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<sup>49</sup> **Latyshev**, *Passio Eusignii*, pp. 85-86 (§ 10).

<sup>50</sup> **Movses Xorenac'i**, *History*, p. 226; **Latyshev**, *Passio Eusignii*, p. 83 (§ 6); **Tēr-Movsēsean**, *Socrates (Life of Sylvester)*, pp. 709-710; **Bais**, *Costantino*, p. 97.

vision occurred just after noon, as the sun was moving westward (see below). The description of the cross is rather varied, and the differences between Movsēs Xorenac‘i and the redactions of the *Life of Sylvester* are particularly conspicuous. All versions report a writing, sometimes with stars, that promised victory if Constantine put his faith in and employed this new symbol. Movsēs Xorenac‘i and Malalas transcribe the Latin term *signum* in Armenian and Greek respectively when talking of Constantine’s use of the *labarum*. For Malalas, when Constantine woke up after the *Vision* he : “ἐποίησε σίγνον σταυροῦ/he made a *signum* with a cross”; for Xorenac‘i he “արարեալ սիգնոն/he made a *signum*”. Malalas and Xorenac‘i appear to rely on a common source for this episode, which was not the Greek *Actus Silvestri* (that lacks the *Vision*) or the Armenian *Life of Sylvester*’s insert *Passio Eusignii*.<sup>51</sup>

The table indicates that no clear-cut transmission chain may be established between the various texts with regards to this textual unit, despite efforts in the past to do so. A direct relationship among all or any pair of the texts is not only difficult to establish but its utility is unclear, unless one engages in the ever-elusive search for a unitary *Ur-text* that lies behind one or all of them. Instead, we observe a multiplicity of synchronic and diachronic traditions. Furthermore, the absence of critical editions in most cases or, at least, a thorough study of manuscript traditions and ramifications of text-types when it comes to the hagiographic compositions in question, make the comparisons even more problematic. Establishing a chronological sequence is hampered by debates on the dating of texts, most notably the heated discussions on Movsēs Xorenac‘i’s *History*, but also the uncertain date of *Passio Eusignii*. The one cautious conclusion one may propose is that the situation of the transmission and diffusion of an extremely popular narrative appears to be, expectedly, rather messy and difficult to fit into a neat chain of transmission from one text to another. So much can be said even based on a limited sample of extant written witnesses to this motif, let alone if we key in the ubiquitous and prolific oral traditions, for

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<sup>51</sup> Thomson, *Moses Khorenats‘i*, p. 230 fn 606 affirms that Xorenac‘i’s source of the “account of the *labarum*, which appeared to Constantine before the Milvian bridge” was taken from the Armenian *Acts of Sylvester*. As argued above, this conclusion cannot be accepted. Let me emphasise that neither Xorenac‘i nor the other texts in the table above mention the Milvian Bridge, which was just one among many variants of the locations where Constantine’s *Vision* took place. It was not as popular in the East and it is not surprising that Xorenac‘i does not mention it. See also Bais’ skepticism on Thomson’s identification of the *Life of Sylvester* as Xorenac‘i’s source for the episode and description of the *labarum*: Bais, Costantino, pp. 99-100.

example via liturgical celebrations.<sup>52</sup> This makes a search for a single, complete textual unit as a univocal source of Xorenac‘i’s description of the *Vision of Constantine* a hazardous, if not misleading, enterprise.

Movsēs Xorenac‘i’s reference to the *Discovery of the Cross* is rather brief. As mentioned above, the historian not only knew the *Doctrina Addai* but ‘armenianised’ it, adding details that connected Thaddaeus’ mission to Armenia through numerous ties. This was also the purpose of the Armenian *Martyrdom of Thaddaeus and Sanduxt*. Yet, for the *Discovery of the Cross* Xorenac‘i did not rely on the Protonike version, translated and transmitted together with the *Doctrina Addai*. Rather, also here the similarities with the account of Malalas are striking and both have the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* in mind, rather than the H version of the *Discovery*:

Movsēs Xorenac‘i <sup>53</sup>	John Malalas <sup>54</sup>
<p>... յետ այնորիկ առաքեաց գ՛եղինէ զմայր իւր յԵրուսաղէմ ի խնդիր պատուական խաչին. զոր եւ եզիտ իսկ զհրկական փայտն հանդերձ հինգ բեւե- նօքն, ի ձեռն Յուդայի հրէի, որ ապա եկաց եպիսկոպոս յԵրուսաղէմ:</p> <p>...after that he [Constantine] sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to search the honourable cross. She found the saving wood with the five nails through Judas, a Jew, who later became bishop of Jerusalem.</p>	<p>Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος ἔπεμψε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα τὴν κυρὰν Ἑλένην εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα εἰς ἀναζήτησιν τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ. ἦτις καὶ εὐροῦσα ἀνήγαγε τὸν αὐτὸν τίμιον σταυρὸν μετὰ τῶν πέντε ἥλων. Καὶ ἠὺξήθη ἐξ ἐκείνου τὰ τῶν χριστιανῶν πάντα.</p> <p>The emperor Constantine sent his mother, lady Helena, to Jerusalem to search the honourable cross. Finding it, she brought back the honourable cross with five nails. And from that time Christianity grew in every way.</p>

<sup>52</sup> On feasts related to the cross in the Armenian liturgy see **Charles Renoux**, *La croix dans le rite arménien*, *Parole d'Orient* 5/1, 1969, pp. 123-75; **Daniel Findikyan**, *Armenian Hymns of the Church and the Cross*, *St. Nersess Theological Review* 11, 2006, pp. 63-105; **Idem**, “Armenian Hymns of the Holy Cross and the Jerusalem *Encaenia*,” *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 32, 2010, pp. 25-58; **Garibian**, *Costantino*, pp. 453-455.

<sup>53</sup> **Movsēs Xorenac‘i**, *History*, p. 236.

<sup>54</sup> **Ioannis Malalae**, *Chronographia*, p. 245 (Book 13, §5); translation taken with modifications from **Jeffreys – Jeffreys – Scott**, *John Malalas*, p. 172

In this instance, we are on much firmer ground to affirm that the two texts almost mirror each other and, consequently, must rely on a common source. Yet, there are also differences. While both are clearly dependent on the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* only Xorenac'i cites specifically Judas. Like in the case of the *Vision of Constantine* also for the *Discovery of the True Cross* narratives there are numerous variants, as discussed above. One must disagree with Thomson that "Socrates I.17, gives a fuller version of the story" which implies that a) Xorenac'i relied on Socrates and b) there was a 'fuller' and in some way 'normative' version of the *Discovery of the True Cross*. Yet, Thomson rightly remarks that Socrates does not mention Judas Kyriakos.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Socrates was the earliest Greek source to testify to knowledge of the *H version*, thus the discovery by *Helena* without the help of Judas Kyriakos. This is the version reported in the Long Armenian Socrates. The redactor of Short Socrates P'ilon, on the other hand, adds further details (see below) that indicate the popularity of the J-K version in Armenia. Yet, he too does not specifically mention Judas Kyriakos. This, again, comes to reinforce the hypothesis that when alluding to the *Discovery of the Cross* Xorenac'i did not rely directly or only on the Long or Short Socrates. Rather, both Xorenac'i and P'ilon are familiar with the *Discovery of the Cross by Helena* in its J-K version, but in what exact shape they knew this text is not possible to define. On the other hand, there are close verbal parallels when Xorenac'i describes how Constantine sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem and the recounting of the episode in *Vg* and *Va*.<sup>56</sup>

Unlike Long Socrates, but similar to Short Socrates, Xorenac'i attests to knowledge and the diffusion of the *Judas Kyriakos Legend* in Armenia. This was already implicit in Łazar P'arpec'i's *History*. On the other hand, Xorenac'i provides different details compared to Short Socrates which indicates, once more, Xorenac'i's multiple and diverse sources, as usual. Therefore, based on Xorenac'i's, P'arpec'i's and P'ilon's reworking of Socrates we must question the assumption that the P version was the most popular *Discovery of the Cross* story in Armenian. The question of why this may be the case lies beyond the scope of this paper.

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<sup>55</sup> Thomson, Moses Khorenats'i, p. 238, fn 641.

<sup>56</sup> Garibian, Costantino, p. 446. See above for the citation of *Vg*.

### 3.3. Socrates Scholasticus and rare variants of the *Vision and Discovery of the Cross in Armenian*

None of the texts discussed above make an explicit reference to Constantine's *Vision at the Milvian Bridge*. We must turn to Socrates Scholasticus to evaluate the appearance and spread of this variant in Armenia. As is well-known Socrates recounted Constantine's *Vision at the Milvian Bridge* which was faithfully translated and transmitted in Armenian, too.<sup>57</sup> Unlike most renderings of the vision we saw above, Socrates placed it during the day: “ի միջառլէին մինչ արեգակն ընթանայր ի մուտն/during the day as the sun was moving towards setting”.<sup>58</sup> Yet, P'ilon and likely his readers, were unfamiliar with this version “մերձ ի կամուրջն, որ կոչի Սուվիա/near the bridge called Mulvia” and the redactor simply omitted the description of this *Vision*. Yet, he did keep an allusion to it, with an unmistakable reference to the *Vision on the Danube*: եւ յաղթող երեւեալ նշանաւ իսաչին Քրիստոսի ընդ ամենայն երկիր **յևթներորդ ամի թագաւորութեան Կոստանդիանոսի**/and he appeared victorious through the sign of the cross of Christ in the whole world **in the seventh year of the rule of Constantine**.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, we shall recall that the *Vision of the Cross on the Danube* occurred in the seventh year of the reign of Constantine, as he was about to fight barbarians. P'ilon's update signals once more that his readers were familiar with and expected to read the *Vision on the Danube*. This is not surprising given the popularity of *this* variant in other eastern Christian languages too.

Socrates is the earliest Greek author to report the *Discovery of the Cross* by Helena (the H variant).<sup>60</sup> The Armenian Long Socrates, again, faithfully translated the Greek *Vorlage* of this *Discovery*. The adapted version, however, once more updated the narrative based on the author's (and his readers') awareness of the Holy sites in Jerusalem, the celebrations of the Encaenia on September 13<sup>th</sup> and the Feast of the Cross on September 14. Most importantly, P'ilon Tirakac'i confirms my argument regarding which was the best-known *Discovery* narrative in his time. He leaves no doubt that it was the J-K version. We read, that coming to Jerusalem Helena:

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<sup>57</sup> *Tēr-Movsēsean*, Socrates, pp. 4-5 on Constantine's *Vision of the Cross* at the Milvian Bridge.

<sup>58</sup> *Tēr-Movsēsean*, Socrates, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Tēr-Movsēsean*, Socrates, p. 5, emphasis is mine.

<sup>60</sup> See the main outline of Socrates' narrative in *Drijvers*, Helena Augusta, pp. 103-4. The relevant parts of Armenian Socrates are in *Tēr-Movsēsean*, Socrates, pp. 45-50.

Եւ ժողովեալ զիրեայսն խնդրեաց զփայտ խաչին Զրիստոսի որպէս ցուցանէ պատմութիւն զգիւտ խաչին եւ բեւեռացն. եւ ես աւելորդ համարեցայ գրել: ... Եւ մասն ինչ ի սուրբ խաչէն թողոյր յԵրուսաղէմ, եւ զայն առեալ ընդ իւր ածեր ի Կոստանդնուպօլիս բեւեռօքն: Եւ առնեն նաւակտիս ի ԺԳ Սեպտեմբերի եւ յերկրորդ աւուրն ԺԴ Սեպտեմբերի տօն սրբոյ խաչին: Եւ ապա ցուցանի սուրբ խաչն թագաւորին եւ բազմութեան ժողովոյն եւ համբուրէր թագաւորն, եւ փարէր զնովաւ եւ որպէս խաչասագեստս լինէր եւ զուարճանայր, օրհնէր զԱստուած:

[Helena] assembled the Jews and asked for the wood of the cross of Christ as the *History of the Discovery of the Cross and the Nails* indicates and which I find to be superfluous to write down. ... And she left a portion of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. And taking another portion with her she brought it together with the nails to Constantinople. And they [celebrate] the Encaenia on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September and on the second day, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, the Feast of the Holy Cross. And then the Holy Cross was shown to the Emperor and the multitude of the people. And the Emperor kissed and embraced it, as if becoming clothed in the cross and he rejoiced and blessed God.<sup>61</sup>

Taking into consideration that Movsēs Xorenac‘i, Łazar P‘arpec‘i and the redactor of Short Socrates P‘ilon Tirakac‘i all referred to the J-K version of the *Discovery of the Cross*, it is legitimate to suppose that like in the Latin and Greek traditions, also in the Armenian this was the most popular story on the finding of the Holy Wood, at least up to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Although further historical and philological research is necessary to corroborate this preliminary conclusion, given the present state of knowledge it appears that the Protonike legend acquired popularity later than the J-K version. Further research is necessary to understand the reasons for this situation. As a working hypothesis one may suggest that the P version, connected with the Syriac current of the Armenian Christianity, was overshadowed by the pre-eminence of the so-called northern (or Greek) substratum of the Armenian Christianity in which the J-K legend fit better. The P version’s diffusion may be due to the ninth century *History of Hrip‘imeank‘ Saints* composed in Vaspurakan under Arcruni patronage and attributed to Movsēs Xorenac‘i. This *History* created a direct link between the True Cross relic discovered by Queen Protonikē and Armenia, specifically the True Cross of Varag. According to the *History of Hrip‘imeank‘*

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<sup>61</sup> *Tēr-Movsēsean*, Socrates, pp. 46-9.

*Saints* Abbess Gayanē gave the relic discovered by Protonike (Patronikē in the Armenian tradition) to Hrip‘simē who brought it to Armenia and hid it on top of Mount Varag. It was then discovered in the seventh century by the ascetic T‘odik and his disciple Yovel. The True Cross of Varag was one of the most popular True Cross relics in Armenia until 1915.<sup>62</sup> It is likely that the story of *Protonike’s Discovery* was popularized thanks to this connection to the True Cross of Varag. This hypothesis deserves further research.

#### 4. Conclusions

This article explored the diffusion of two extremely popular hagiographical narratives in Armenia between the fifth and the end of the seventh centuries: *Constantine’s Vision of the Cross* and stories on the *Discovery of the True Cross*. Each of these two groups of stories had different variants attested in various languages and probably circulated also orally. The article shows that both variants of *Constantine’s Vision* – at the Milvian Bridge or near the river Danube – were available in Armenian. The *Vision at the Danube*, known to Łazar P‘arpec‘i, circulated more widely and may have travelled with the *Discovery of the Cross by Helena* in the version known as the *Judas Kyriakos Legend*. This situation is similar to what is attested in Greek and Syriac manuscripts where the *Vision at the Danube* often appears as a prologue to the *Judas Kyriakos* version of the *Discovery of the Cross*. Analysing the *Vision of the Cross* as reported by Movsēs Xorenac‘i I argue that he relied on multiple sources in creating his narrative. Contrary to what is often affirmed, his description of the *Vision* is markedly different from what we read in the two Armenian versions of the *Life of Sylvester*, which are based on another hagiographical tale – *Passio Eusignii* – for this episode. The complex situation of Xorenac‘i’s sources for these specific narratives is a case in point for this author’s *modus operandi* and reminds us of the difficulties and dangers when expressing hasty judgements on Xorenac‘i and his use of sources. These are never single and unequivocally identifiable not only for this particular episode, but for many other parts of his intricate *History*. The article also questions the common wisdom regarding the greater popularity of the

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<sup>62</sup> For the True Cross of Varag see **Zaroui Pogossian**, *Relics, Rulers, Patronage: The True Cross of Varag and the Church of the Holy Cross on Alt‘amar*, in **Pogossian, Z., Vardanyan, E.** (eds), *The Church of the Holy Cross on Alt‘amar: Politics, Art, Spirituality in the Kingdom of Vaspurakan*, Leiden, 2019, pp. 126-205.

*Discovery of the Cross by Protonike* in Armenia because of its connection to the *Doctrina Addai* and the popularity of Apostle Thaddaeus as the founder of the Armenian Church. The source-critical analysis indicates that the situation in late antiquity seems to have been different. Not only did Łazar P'arpeci and Movsēs Xorenac'i allude to the *Discovery of the Cross by Helena* in the Judas-Kyriakos variant, but also P'ilon Tirakac'i explicitly evoked it in his revision and reworking of the Armenian translation of Socrates Scholasticus' *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Life of Sylvester*. P'ilon's purpose was to make these texts more understandable and relatable to his Armenian readers. His reference to the *Discovery of the Cross and the Nails* as a story well-known to "everyone" goes a long way in attesting the popularity of the J-K version of the *Discovery* in Armenia by the end of the seventh century. Lastly, the article reveals serious gaps in research on the Armenian traditions on the *Discovery of the Cross* due to the lack of critical editions and the accompanying study of the manuscript tradition. It is my hope that future scholars will undertake this difficult but rewarding task.

### ABSTRACT

This article explores the diffusion of texts and traditions on Emperor Constantine's *Vision of the Cross* and stories on the *Discovery of the True Cross* in late antique Armenia. It compares the Greek originals and translation of the relevant hagiographical sources to Armenian with versions of the same narratives incorporated by Armenian authors in their works, such as Łazar P'arpec'i, Movsēs Xorenac'i and P'ilon Tirakac'i who reworked the original Armenian translations of Socrates Scholasticus' *Ecclesiastical History* together with the *Life of Sylvester*. Based on these sources it argues that the *Judas-Kyriakos* version of the *Discovery of the Cross by Helena* and Constantine's *Vision on the Danube* were probably the most popular text-types of these narratives, similar to what is attested in other eastern Christian linguistic traditions. The work signals the lack of proper scholarly editions of several hagiographies as a serious gap that often hampers the advancement of studies on these texts and their diffusion. Finally, the author hopes that part of the analyses will contribute to a better understanding of Movsēs Xorenac'i's sources and their use by him when recounting legends about the Cross.

**ՉԱՐՈՒՀԻ ՊՈՂՈՍՅԱՆ**

**ԽԱՉԻ ԵՐԵՎՄԱՆ ԵՎ ԽԱՉԱՓԱՅՏԻ ԳՅՈՒՏԻ  
ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ ՈՒՇ ԱՆՏԻԿ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ.  
ԹԱՐԳՄԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ, ԸՆԿԱԼՈՒՄ ԵՎ ՍՏԵՂԾԱԳՈՐԾՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**

*Բանալի բառեր՝ Խաչի երևում, Խաչափայտի գյուտ, Կոստանդին կայսր, ուշ անտիկ ժամանակաշրջան, վարքագրություն, սրբախոսություն:*

Մույն հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել «Տեսիլ Սբ. Կոստանդինանոսի վասն Սուրբ Խաչին» եւ Խաչափայտի գյուտին նվիրված բնագրերի շրջանառությունը Հայաստանում՝ ուշ անտիկ ժամանակաշրջանում: Վարքագրական այս պատումների՝ մեզ հասած հայերեն թարգմանությունները եւ հունարեն բնագրերը համեմատել ենք հայ մատենագիրներ Ղազար Փարպեցու, Մովսես Խորենացու եւ Փիլոն Տիրակացու (որը վերամշակել է Սոկրատ Սքոլաստիկոսի «Եկեղեցական պատմության» հունարեն թարգմանությունը «Մեղբետորոսի վարքի» հետ միասին) համառոտ վկայակոչումների հետ: Աղբյուրների տվյալներից կարելի է եզրակացնել, որ ինչպես արևելաքրիստոնեական այլ մշակույթներում, այնպես էլ Հայաստանում ամենատարածվածն են եղել Հեղինե դժխուհու՝ «Խաչի գյուտի» Հուդաս-Կիրակոսի տարբերակը և Կոստանդին կայսեր «Տեսիլի»՝ Դանուբ գետի ափին կատարված լինելու պատումը: Հոդվածն ուշադրություն է հրավիրում այն փաստին, որ վարքագրական բնագրերից որոշները դեռևս չեն արժանացել գիտական հրատարակության, ինչը խոչընդոտում է նրանց ուսումնասիրության առաջընթացին: Հոդվածի նպատակներից է նաև մատնանշել Մովսես Խորենացու աղբյուրների օգտագործման եղանակը՝ խաչին նվիրված այս ավանդությունները շարադրելիս: